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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR JANUARY 31, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for January 31, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

HURRIYET / EVRENSEL: Bird Flu National Coordination Council reportedly confirmed that avian influenza outbreak affected a total of 31 provinces in Turkey, with recent additions of three more provinces on the list, and a total of 1,596,000 birds have been culled to date. Meanwhile, Iraqi Health Minister announced that a 17-year-old girl died because of bird flu disease on January 17. Two people in Sivas's Kangal district got sick after eating meat of a bird which was about to die and were hospitalized in Sivas. Moreover, bird flu was suspected in four people in Batman. These people were reportedly hospitalized.

HURRIYET / ZAMAN: An F-16 military airplane crashed in an area five kilometers away from the Diyarbakir province. The pilot survived as he was able to get out of the plane and use his parachute.

EKSPRES / BOLGE / YENI SAFAK / ZAMAN: A bomb exploded in the Turkish American Association in Adana at 3.15 p.m. yesterday and four people incurred minor wounds during the blast. The bomb exploded in the lobby of the association's building where English courses were being offered. 50 students were in the building when the explosion took place. A small fire reportedly broke out following the blast.

BOLGE / ZAMAN: Jandarma teams in the Seyhan district found three Kalashnikov rifles, four hand grenades, seven cartridges, and many bullets in one of the waste water canals in Adana.

YENI SAFAK / ZAMAN / EVRENSEL / CUMHURİYET / RADIKAL / OZGUR GUNDEM: The inspectors of the Interior Ministry determined that the new year card Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir sent to the Turkish Parliament, which also included a Kurdish "Happy New Year" statement in it, was unconstitutional, and the inspectors demanded in their recent report that action be brought against Baydemir. Interior Ministry sent the report to the Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office. According to the inspectors, said daily Ozgur Gundem, Baydemir openly breached the following clause of the constitution: Turkish state and its nation are marked by unity, the two are inseparable, and the language of the state is Turkish. The inspectors demanded further action against Osman Baydemir and 55 mayors of the southeastern provinces for sending a letter to the prime minister of Denmark to prevent the black-out of the pro-PKK Roj TV in Diyarbakir. (This summary is from 01/28 editions.)

EVRENSEL / YENI SAFAK / OZGUR GUNDEM: Osman Baydemir criticized the investigations started against him for sending a Kurdish new year's card to the parliament and writing a letter to the Danish Prime Minister not to ban the broadcasts of Roj TV. Baydemir said that it was a funny attempt to prosecute a person writing in Kurdish which was a language spoken by a significant number of people in the country. Baydemir said that whatever the court decided about the postcard in Kurdish, he would still continue to speak Kurdish.

EVRENSEL: 182 villages in Mus have been without electricity due to the problems caused by adverse weather conditions. Separately, an avalanche blocked the road to Hakkari's Cukurca district and local authorities have been undertaking tasks for five days to clear the way.

YENI SAFAK: Gaye Erbatur, Vice-Chairperson of the Turkish Parliamentary Commission for Probing Honor Killings, said that the violence women suffered from was no worse than horror film scenarios. According to Erbatur, in order to evade a stain on a family's honor, girls and women are being locked-in their houses, they are being forced to commit suicide, and their noses or ears are being cut off.

YENI SAFAK: One of the actions brought against the Van Centennial University rector Yucel Askin on charges of aiding and abetting the PKK terrorist organization was dropped.

ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily cited a survey reported yesterday on Ozgur Gundem daily. Whereas Ozgur Gundem's report emphasized the guerillas' preferences in music, literature, cinema, religion and sports, Zaman daily only drew attention to the religion aspect of the survey and cited that the most popular leaders for the militants were Zoroaster and Jesus

Christ. Ozgur Gundem said in yesterday's report that most of the militants liked Jenifer Lopez, Kurdish-origin singer Ahmet Kaya, Loreena McKennit, among singers. Most of them read Orhan Pamuk, Murray Bookchin and Amin Maalof. Moreover, the survey results showed that most of the guerillas were a fan of the Galatasaray soccer club in Turkey.

ZAMAN: PKK was reportedly readying to launch terrorist activities, especially in Mersin on February 15, a day which marked the capturing of the terrorist leader Abdullah Ocalan in Kenyan capital Nairobi seven years ago.

ZAMAN: Subgovernor of Osmaniye's Kadirli district said that the attempt to burn a Turkish flag in yesterday's incident in Kadirli did not have a political character (see press summary 01/30). According to the subgovernor, the flag was probably burned by unknown person(s) seeking a source of heat.

OZGUR GUNDEM: According to the daily, legal amendments adopted in 2003 in Turkey have been preventing many former political prisoners in Turkey, who have served their prison sentences, from engaging in political life. Basing its move on these legal amendments, Prosecutor's Office of the Supreme Court sent a January 24-dated letter to the DTP (Democratic Society Party) demanding that they drop the membership of its 74 founding members.

OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: The refugees in the Mahmur camp conveyed their demands in a report submitted to the UN delegation that is currently visiting the camp. Reportedly, the refugees would only return to Turkey if Turkey freed Abdullah Ocalan, granted the right to mother tongue education, abolished the village guard system, issued a general amnesty for militants in the mountains and jailed political prisoners, paid compensation for the damages incurred by the refugees' displacement.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Derik Municipality in Mardin named a park after Ugur Kaymaz, a 13-year-old child, who was killed with his father by security forces in Mardin's Kiziltepe district in November 2004.
REID